

Exhibition

Roger Hiorns Today

Mar. 23 - June 30, 2024



Roger Hiorns, Untitled (Pathways), Youth and Mercedes Engine, 2011- Ongoing, Courtesy the Artist

With the 2024 theme *Between Past and Future*, Kestner Gesellschaft concludes a trilogy of its self-reflection which began in 2022 with the investigation of the notion of tenderness (Olga Tokarczuk) and was continued in 2023 by a series of exhibitions, focused on the concept of *anabasis* (Paul Celan).

Amor Mundi and eight exercises in political thought *Between Past and Future* by one of the most relevant thinkers of today's age, Hanover-born Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) are considered master-narratives for this year's exhibition program, and constitute a frame of reference for the future.

The exhibition *TODAY* by **Roger Hiorns** inaugurates this program by examining our experience of authority. The notion of authority, the authoritarian systems and the control they impose lie at the core of his multifaceted practice. For Hiorns, the consideration of disobedience and the norm, humility and resistance contribute to the understanding of the three "losses" Arendt writes about: the loss of tradition, the loss of religion, and the loss of authority. In "What Is Authority?", Arendt observes that our inability to understand authority is, in fact, symptomatic of our inability to understand democracy and its core commitment to freedom. "We mistakenly equate power with subordination, and subordination with coercion," she explains. Authority is, of course, hierarchical, but it does not coerce. Arendt investigates the possibility of power without coercion, and freedom without control; she offers an alternative to existing forms of authority that confronts us with the possibility and indeed the necessity of developing human capacities for "building, preserving, and caring".

The Kestner Gesellschaft is presenting the first institutional solo exhibition in Germany by the British artist Roger Hiorns. Hiorns's work is a thoughtful reflection on the fragility of human life and the matrix of political and authoritarian structures that condition and control it. The title of the exhibition refers to the BBC morning radio program "Today," which can be heard as a sound installation and which places the entire production in a current political context.

A selection of his famous, large-scale paintings from the *Pathways* series is shown in Hall 1. They show depictions of sexual acts between several male figures. The form of gestural painting keeps the lean, pale bodies anonymous and rather abstract. They interact in an orgiastic frenzy, like a wild, occult dance, captured here in a momentary image.

In Hall 2, we see living sculptures from the *Youths* series, which consist of large motors, jet engines, X-ray machines, and refrigerators paired with young, naked male bodies that are "occupied" by them. It is a silent dialog conducted between the young bodies and the remnants of machines, which evokes associations of war, power, authority, obedience, and sexuality. In the interplay of other works such as the *Prayer Paintings* series and his foam sculptures, Hiorns opposes the moral gaze of society in order to expose the "depraved" and thus arrive at the truth. Unfortunately, you can only see our *Youth* at selected times in our exhibition. Please contact our reception desk for further information or simply let us surprise you.

Roger Hiorns, born in 1975 in Birmingham, England, lives and works in London. He received his BA (Hons) in Fine Art at Goldsmiths College, University of London in 1996. His works have been shown in international solo and group exhibitions. These include the Venice Biennale, MoMA PS1, New York, the Tate Modern, London, the Armand Hammer Museum of Art at UCLA, Los Angeles, the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and De Hallen, Haarlem. Hiorns' works can be found in institutional collections such as the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, and the Tate Modern, London. In 2009, Hiorns was nominated for the Turner Prize.

Curators: Adam Budak, Robert Knoke

Learn more about Roger Hiorns in the exhibition handout.

Installation Images



Roger Hiorns Today, Installation view, 2024, Courtesy the Artist, Photo: Volker Crone.

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